



# Correspondence Management System

Control Number: AX-12-000-3904

Printing Date: February 29, 2012 03:41:31



## Citizen Information

Citizen/Originator: Monson, Margot

Organization: Environment Minnesota

Address: 22 Ludlow Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55108-1915

Constituent: N/A

Committee: N/A

Sub-Committee: N/A

## Control Information

Control Number: AX-12-000-3904

Alternate Number: N/A

Status: Pending

Closed Date: N/A

Due Date: Mar 14, 2012 *3-12-12*

# of Extensions: 0

Letter Date: Feb 19, 2012

Received Date: Feb 29, 2012

Addressee: AD-Administrator

Addressee Org: EPA

Contact Type: LTR (Letter)

Priority Code: Normal

Signature: DX-Direct Reply

Signature Date: N/A

File Code: 404-141-02-01\_141\_a(2) Copy of Controlled and Major Correspondence Record of the EPA Administrator and other senior officials - Electronic.

Subject: Sulfide mining in Minnesota

Instructions: DX-Respond directly to this citizen's questions, statements, or concerns

Instruction Note: N/A

General Notes: N/A

CC: N/A

## Lead Information

Lead Author: N/A

### Lead Assignments:

| Assigner   | Office | Assignee       | Assigned Date | Due Date     | Complete Date |
|--|--------|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Eliska Postell   | OEX    | R5             | Feb 29, 2012  | Mar 14, 2012 | N/A           |
| Instruction:<br>DX-Respond directly to this citizen's questions, statements, or concerns |        |                |               |              |               |
| Gayvonne Gary  | R5     | Norma Ignasiak | Feb 29, 2012  | Mar 14, 2012 | N/A           |
| Instruction:<br>N/A  |        |                |               |              |               |

## Supporting Information

Supporting Author: N/A

### Supporting Assignments:

| Assigner      | Office | Assignee    | Assigned Date |
|---------------|--------|-------------|---------------|
| Gayvonne Gary | R5     | Anita Chico | Feb 29, 2012  |
| Gayvonne Gary | R5     | Nancy Jih   | Feb 29, 2012  |

## History



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| Action By      | Office | Action                                    | Date         |
|----------------|--------|---|--------------|
| Eliska Postell | OEX    | Assign R5 as lead office                  | Feb 29, 2012 |
| Gayvonne Gary  | R5     | Accepted the group assignment             | Feb 29, 2012 |
| Gayvonne Gary  | R5     | Assign Norma Ignasiak as lead             | Feb 29, 2012 |
| Gayvonne Gary  | R5     | Assign Anita Chico to support the control | Feb 29, 2012 |
| Gayvonne Gary  | R5     | Assign Nancy Jih to support the control   | Feb 29, 2012 |

### Comments

| Commentator      | Comment | Date |
|------------------|---------|------|
| No Record Found. |         |      |



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at

February 19, 2012

Margot Monson  
22 Ludlow Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
[mpmonson.insx@gmail.com](mailto:mpmonson.insx@gmail.com)

2012 FEB 27 PM 2:13

Commissioner Jackson:

Last March I organized a group of 12 concerned citizens, and with MN State Representative Alice Hausman's help, we met with Commissioners Paul Aasen of the MPCA and Tom Landwehr of the MN DNR in the MN State Office Building to discuss sulfide mining in MN, which will impact the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) and Lake Superior watersheds. They were quite cordial and gave us 45 minutes of their time for which we were very appreciative. At the end of the session they recommended that we communicate with others who feel as strongly about sulfide mining and let our views be known to Gov. Dayton, our Legislators and Congressional Senators and Representatives and you. I sent you a letter about my concerns on Feb 2, 2011.

Some members of this group had years of experience as BWCA campers, some were former employees of the MPCA, DNR, and the EPA, others were small business owners from Ely, and my husband and I are lifelong MN resident scientists with a passion for preserving what is left of our wilderness, for future generations.

I know you are well aware that the history of sulfide mining in the U.S. is dismal. There have been mines in at least nine states that have left huge environmental damage that is still very evident today and the "financial assurances" in place did not cover all costs in any attempt to clean-up the mess, and in some case no attempts were made. Examples of such failed mines are: the Gilt Edge Mine in SD, Zortman-Landusky Mine in MT, Flambeau Mine in WI, and there are others with similar histories in Alaska, Idaho, Michigan, Oregon, Colorado, and Washington. Although it may be possible to remove and contain some toxic materials, much of the time it ends up in a pit filled with water, and many of those end up leaching and polluting surface and groundwater. Furthermore, the toxic acid mine drainage from tailing sites and coal mines here in MN is still present in ponds *to this day*, and currently is polluting Lake Vermillion, as well as streams and wetlands. How can we be letting this happen, let alone begin other, significantly more damaging, sulfide mining operations?

PolyMet's first Draft Environmental Impact statement (DEIS) was rejected by you, because of "unacceptable environmental impacts", particularly because it did not meet water quality standards for sulfates. There is now an effort to get our water quality standards lowered for sulfates by pressuring the MPCA. You must agree that revision in water quality standards

should be based on careful research and not changed without it. While attending legislative hearings on this subject I heard suggestions for lowering standards now, facilitating the DEIS approval for mining companies, and waiting until *after* research is done to further revise changes. This is simply not the way to go about changing standards, because they must be based on credible scientific research. Is it even legally possible for this to happen so casually? If PolyMet's supplement to the DEIS is approved by these methods, it will be easier for the several other mining companies currently waiting in line to secure their future operations, and they have repeatedly stated that PolyMet is "plowing the way".

As an aquatic entomologist, I have worked and done research in wetlands, and I'm sure you well know that these complex ecosystems have been evolving for millions of years. There is no amount of financial assurance that will *ever ever* be able to repair the damage done by this type of mining, because it is not possible to restore an ecosystem to its original function after such degradation. We humans cannot recreate what evolved naturally.

The PolyMet proposal includes three open pit mines and five large permanent waste rock piles, which will be destructive enough to our wetlands, but the tailings basin and 2 waste rock piles will be unlined; and even the MN DNR expects that the lined piles will leak. Knowing these basic facts, I do not see how we can ignore the obvious fact that the destruction and future pollution is going to be permanent.

Our former Vice President Walter Mondale, as a guest on MPR, was asked about his concerns for the future. He made a plea for a serious commitment to environmental protection in MN and I would like to quote his words for you again here:

**"What we should be aiming at is preparing MN and the nation for the next generation. We should be measuring ourselves by whether we're making it better for our kids and their kids, or not, and one of the things we are really slipping on is the environment. There is all kinds of evidence that man produced global warming in all the obvious costs of that and growing costs of that. We've got environmental issues here at home that I don't think we are dealing with. The easiest thing to do when somebody's got a commercial project that makes money and it takes a little bit of wetland or it goes across a river, is to say let's do this now because it is needed, and maybe it is, but where you have precious areas of natural beauty, where you're dealing with the health of people and the air, and the water, and you want something left for our kids and our grandchildren so they can see how beautiful this country can be. I think that's worth a lot, but it is hard to do it politically right now, but I think we need to."**

Commissioner Jackson, I want to applaud you for your service in such a contentious environment. I can only imagine your utter frustration in trying to work with obstructionist

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forces trying to undermine the very existence of the EPA, and I am deeply grateful for the action you took on the PolyMet DEIS. I'm sure every state has its own very precious resources, but what we have in Minnesota is truly unique in the entire country, attracting people from this country and beyond. As a member of Environment Minnesota, I was a listener during the conference call on Feb 9<sup>th</sup> and did not hear any mention of the serious environmental impacts of sulfide mining. If future generations will be able to experience our wilderness in all its beauty and complexity, as far as sulfide mining is concerned, so much will depend on your continued work as a steward for our environment.

With due respect for the many hours you serve and the weight of the issues you must consider, I hope you will find the time to respond to my concerns personally. I believe this is too important an issue for a reply by form letter from an aide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margot Monson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Margot Monson



Margot Monson  
22 Ludlow Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108



Lisa Jackson  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
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